just you and I

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things were supposed to get better once they reached the end. They didn't. [AU][One-shot]

Rated: Fiction T - English - [Madoka K., Homura A.] - Words: 9,571 - Reviews: 9 - Favs: 17 - Follows: 4 - Published: May 1 - Status: Complete - id: 10312936

It's been building for a while now; maybe back in the first desert, where they had trekked through endless sand.

Most likely, even before that.

The first sign, had to have been Madoka's lost smile. It's been… many worlds since she has last seen it.

Her words, slowly became shorter.

Stories of her family slowly disappeared; plans when they returned home, forgotten.

Words, eventually became silence.

The only sounds, became their footsteps.

And now, as they pass a large forest that expands as far as their eyes can see, she's not surprised when Madoka turns to her.

Night is soon.

The setting sun casts an orange tinge across everything, and—it's the look in her eyes that tell her of things to come.

"Homura-chan..."

How long has it been since she last heard her name from those lips?

"I think, we should split up."

She nods, already turning away.

"...In the morning," Madoka tells her. "I will head in a different direction."

She doesn't respond, merely taking a seat on the soft earth, lavender eyes staring to the forest straight ahead.

Madoka joins her, bumping their shoulders together and hands suddenly intertwined.

Night falls, and Madoka remains curled next to her.

In the morning, a soft 'good luck' whispered, a gentle kiss upon her lips, and then goodbye.

/

She remains, in front of that forest.

Unlike Madoka, who is filled with lasting hopes and hopeful dreams, she is nothing here. Nothing back there.

She has no reason to return, no reason to wander.

Maybe, that is why Madoka left: an aimless companion is worse than nothing at all.

She remains, lying in front of that forest.

She curls in, eyes closing, and sleeps.

\

Days pass, but it doesn't matter. They need no food, need no water.

Their wounds always heal within days. The only changes: remnant scars that held no explanation.

There are plenty of those lining her body, under her school uniform that repairs itself when they cross into new worlds.

Her eyes, beneath those thick, red framed glasses of hers, close once more.

She sleeps.

/

She's aware of her breathing, the steady rise and fall of her chest.

Was this also something they needed?

If she stops, will she die?

She sucks in a deep breath, mouth closing.

A gasp as air is forced out by an unseen hand.

Her body automatically draws in another breath.

She's entirely too aware of how disappointed she is.

\

She wakes one day, staring at the forest in front of her, and decides, she is tired of it.

Instead of her moving, she, wants to move it.

There are no tools here, and she tries her best to search for the sharpest rock she can find.

The end of the day, there are shallow notches in one of the tree trunks, and her fingers are a bloody mess.

But she's filled with a sense of purpose: the forest in front of her, she decides, will become a wasteland by her own hands.

/

When the first tree drops with a loud crash, the sound surprises her as it echoes.

Dust sprinkles into the air, and she coughs as it surrounds her.

One down, how many more to go?

\

She easily falls into routine.

Days spent, hands slicked with blood as she carves into trees.

Nights, sleeping as her hands heal with whatever that keeps her alive.

And every day repeats.

/

There are culled trees, scattered around.

The forest not even half gone.

She inhales, entirely too aware of the broken ribs that move, how there's a strange sound coming from her punctured lung; the tree on top of her is preventing wounds from healing properly, and it's an endless cycle as her body struggles to repair itself.

She doesn't mind though.

She doesn't mind becoming a tree.

Her eyes behind those cracked glasses, close.

And she sleeps.

\

It's been so long, that the unfamiliar sounds wake her.

Footsteps—soft, surefooted.

Her eyes glance around.

She has no idea what the source is.

Doesn't remember how long she has been here.

She closes her eyes as her ribs once more try to realign themselves.

But the tree is still there.

And the cycle repeats.

/

Her eyes snap open, to the sight of something she no longer recognizes.

Someone is there, struggling to free her, pushing *her* tree away.

Her mouth opens, a gurgle of blood from the lungs that cannot heal.

"Don't worry, Homura-chan..."

A familiar sound.

"I'll free you, I promise."

She closes her eyes.

\

It's been a while since she's been able to breath freely; it's a strange feeling.

Days have passed, and finally she remembers who this person is.

Madoka.

Madoka, why are you here?

Words do not form properly on her tongue; she doesn't remember how to speak anymore.

Gentle hands brush across her cheeks, and suddenly there's warmth on her lips.

She's pushed down, and the familiar feeling of something crushing her soothes her.

Madoka is—crying, tears trickle down, scattering like raindrops on glass. There's the taste of salt as she continues to press their lips together.

"Homura-chan..." A soft whisper. "I'm sorry," she repeats. "I'm sorry."

/

Madoka, doesn't understand.

She feels her gaze, always watching as she continues to cut down those trees.

Madoka wants her to leave—but she can't. These trees—are all she has.

And she can't leave until they all fall down.

Days pass, until Madoka joins her.

\

It's an ongoing task; the forest never seems to end.

But one day, as the loud sound echoes, she realizes the last tree is gone.

Her job is done.

She takes a seat on the newest stump, eyes overlooking her masterpiece.

Madoka is suddenly there, and her lips are on hers.

"Homura-chan... let's continue moving, okay?"

Her eyes are blank as she looks around.

She... wants to find more trees.

She nods.

/

There's a glimpse of whatever Madoka is searching for, in the next world: it's the first city they have stepped into.

There are buildings. Streets.

Everything—but people.

Madoka is eager. Hand gripping hers, as she's dragged around.

They finally stop at a random house, and like everything else, it's furnished.

Madoka pulls her to the single bed, and it's the first time in a long while that they sleep on something that isn't the hard ground; it's strange.

\

They stay there, because Madoka takes comfort in the familiar surroundings.

She is restless though; there are only stone buildings here, no trees to harvest.

She settles for digging into dirt as a reminder.

Madoka watches her, always touching her face, her neck, her hands.

"Homura-chan. Did you want to leave?"

She doesn't reply.

/

They eventually leave, and the world after that is far worse.

It's a swamp, with mud, and murky water.

Their shoes and socks are soaked as they step, and the overgrown grass makes it hard to navigate through.

"I can't wait to get out of here," Madoka grumbles, struggling to pull her foot out from where it's stuck.

She stops and tries to help her; it ends with the both of them sputtering and spitting out muddy water.

"Ugh," Madoka shakes her head. "The next world, better be some place nicer."

She agrees.

\

It is neither better, nor is it worse.

It's different.

A tropical setting, with large vines that stretch across. They are hard to avoid, and by the time they reach the end, there are plenty of new scars lingering upon their skin.

/

Sometimes at night, she stays up, listening to Madoka sleep.

She wonders why her own mind has broken, when Madoka seems to be more or less, still relatively sane.

What continues to hold her together? Time is endless here, and things make no sense.

Her arm wraps around Madoka's waist; why are they so different?

\

The next world, is full of the tallest trees they have ever seen.

She gets the strangest urge to climb, but Madoka pulls her away when she recognizes that look in her eyes—she wants to go up, but there is no guarantee she will safely come down.

/

It feels like the worlds are repeating: deserts, forests, swamp, ocean, ocean, ocean.

The water worlds are the strangest to her. They can breathe underwater, and walk on the ocean floor.

Bubbles follow them as they continue, and sometimes she finds herself lost as she watches them float by.

It's only Madoka's steady hand that keeps her moving on.

\

Madoka is bleeding, a fall down an unseen ravine.

"I'm okay, Homura-chan," Madoka whispers, hands brushing tears away.

She makes no sound, and lowers her head to Madoka's chest. Her heartbeat is still strong, and her wounds are healing.

Bloodied fingers thread through her hair.

"Have to be more careful," Madoka murmurs, hands moving down to touch her cheeks again, leaving more red smears and bloody fingerprints.

She doesn't mind.

She closes her eyes, joining Madoka in sleep.

/

"How long have we been wandering, Homura-chan?" Madoka asks softly.

She lifts her head to stare into pink eyes.

"I'm not sure either," Madoka tells her. "I miss them. Mama, and Papa, and Takkun, and Sayaka-chan, Hitomi-chan... Saotome-sensei, school, and homework. Sleeping in my own bed... everything... I miss everything so, so much..."

It's the first time Madoka has mentioned them in a long time.

\

Sometimes, Madoka's touches are more desperate and her kisses are more rough, like she's trying to reassure herself that she's real; that she's not alone.

They have been together for a while now. She's not sure when things had started, but Madoka always takes the lead.

Things never go beyond kisses, but sometimes she can tell that Madoka wants more.

She's not sure what that is though, and they're both inexperienced that their innocence has yet to leave them.

As long as she's close enough, Madoka is content, for now.

/

This world is new: rolling hills.

When her foot slips, Madoka is shouting her name as she slides down slick grass, hands struggling to grip something.

She lies dazed at the bottom, hands and legs torn from her desperate attempts, glasses, lying broken somewhere else.

Madoka is breathing hard when she finally arrives.

She's suddenly reminded of that very first mountain.

Madoka lies down next to her; it's their ritual now, to stay with the injured until they heal.

She closes her eyes as warm hands hold her close.

\

She realizes that, if they were ever to leave, she has no idea what will happen to her.

Will the insanity hit her the hardest? Or the loneliness of a life without every second with Madoka?

They are all they have in this place, of wherever they are.

She decides, she'll give up if that happens.

It comforts her to know what she has already decided.

/

This new world, has a slow moving stream in the middle of the forest.

Madoka suddenly wants to take a bath.

They both strip down, and step into the water.

Their bodies are lined with various scars; at this point, she's not sure who has more.

But Madoka is staring at her very closely.

"Homura-chan... come here..."

She moves over.

\

A beach with crystal clear waters; if there had been fish, she knows it would've been an amazing place.

But as always, it's only her and Madoka.

She steps closer to the waves and wait as they wash over her shoes.

A hand on her wrist, stopping her from continuing further in; it's not a water world, they can't breathe underwater.

It'll be a painful struggle against drowning and not.

They both know that very well.

/

Sunset, and she's sitting in Madoka's lap.

There's long periods of time, where Madoka just wants to hold her, and they remain in one world for days.

Just... there.

Lips against her neck.

She tilts her head, lavender peering up.

For once, she sees the loneliness in Madoka's eyes.

For once, she takes the lead.

\

It's cold. So very cold.

A school uniform against an arctic blizzard is no match.

They both shiver, huddling together as they continue to slip and slide on the icy surface.

"T-T-This p-p-place s-s-s-sucks," Madoka stammers out.

She nods, and her foot slips. There's the taste of blood as she smashes face forward into the hard ice, glasses once again cracking against the strain.

Madoka is by her side in seconds.

She's half dragged, half slid across the surface; this world is a horrible place to stay at, injured or not.

/

They have still yet to find a pattern. The worlds are random, some hot, some cold.

Dry, and wet, and tepid, and luscious, and warm.

They've only seen a city once, and sometimes Madoka thinks back to it, wondering if they should have stayed.

\

This has to be the worse world so far: flooding rains.

She has already lost Madoka somewhere in roaring rapids, and her eyes desperately try to search for pink in dark waters.

She's not sure if it's tears streaming down her face, or raindrops.

A flash of lightning, and she catches sight of something further downstream.

She runs as fast as she can down the hillside, ignoring her broken ankle to reach Madoka in time.

/

Flat fields, and they decide to stay here for a while.

"This place is nice," Madoka murmurs, her fingers splayed on her back.

She nods, eyes still closed.

"How many more worlds, Homura-chan?" Madoka asks softly.

She shifts, slipping her hands around Madoka's waist.

"You know what sounds good right now, Homura-chan? Chocolate cake..."

Madoka turns her head, lips seeking hers.

"Maybe you taste like chocolate cake, Homura-chan..."

\

Their luck continues: a field of flowers, a prairie, a long winding road.

And then everything is suddenly so high.

Her knees lock as she stares down from a very tall mountain.

Memories of their tumble from their very first, still remains in the forefront of her mind.

Even Madoka gulps nervously.

Five minutes in, she's down, and a minute later, Madoka is joining her.

It takes them days to heal, and even more days to locate each other.

They spend the next world, a jungle, recuperating in each other's arms.

/

A whirlpool, and she wakes with sand sticking to her body.

She sits up, eyes wide. Vision blurry, but her glasses are next to her.

But—

Madoka...?

Madoka, where are you?

Madoka!

\

The desert is unbearably hot, but she remains in the same place, waiting.

If lost, it's a known fact to not move around; she's waiting for Madoka to come find her.

/

She's not sure how much time passes, just that the sun continues to burn, and Madoka is not here.

Are they even on the same world?

She slowly stands.

Her legs are weak, and she starts a shuffle through the soft sand.

She'll scour this whole world—and look for Madoka.

\

Eventually, she reaches the end, and there's that border, signifying the next.

Madoka... was not here.

She takes a deep breath, and pushes forward.

/

Many more worlds—and still no sign.

Madoka...?

\

She stumbles into the next one: the ground is soft with red, clay-like dirt.

And pebbles scattered around.

Pebbles—she stares.

They're shaped into arrows.

She runs.

/

The pebbles eventually disappear, and arrows are etched in their place.

This world is vast—and her lungs burn.

But—

\

She's there, curled in the middle of nothing.

Sleeping.

Her footsteps are soft, a silent whisper on her lips.

Madoka...?

/

Eyes slowly open, and Madoka is staring at her.

A familiar hand reaches, touching her cheek.

"Homura-chan, I knew you'd find me."

She collapses against her, holding her close.

Madoka smiles, arms tightening.

They cross that bridge that day—and stay for a long time after.

\

She shifts, moving to grab her clothes.

Madoka wakes, tilting her head.

They exchange a silent look, and Madoka sighs.

"Alright," Madoka says, finally sitting up.

/

So many, many more worlds.

Until they finally run into a familiar sight.

An amusement park.

It's eerie: a place normally filled with people and laughter.

Empty, except for them.

\

Madoka turns her back for a second, concentrated on posters that remind her of home.

When she turns around, she's gone.

"Homura-chan!?"

/

Madoka finds her, high atop roller coaster tracks.

Sitting, staring down at the world below.

"Homura-chan...?"

She turns, face blank, questions, maybe, poised in her lavender eyes.

Madoka shakily climbs up, joining her.

"What are you doing...?"

She never replies, and merely reaches for Madoka's hand.

They stay until sunset, and when they make their way down, Madoka slips, and they both fall when she tries to catch her.

It's a painful memory, but as they lie there with broken bones, Madoka laughs.

It sends waves of pain in her body, but she doesn't stop.

She curls in next to Madoka, her laughs jolting her uncomfortably.

But she doesn't pull away.

\

They start running into more cityscapes, and Madoka starts smiling more.

The familiar sights renew whatever hope that is still alive within; she merely follows after Madoka, still aimless.

/

It's an endless corridor, and they've been walking for a while, until Madoka finally notices it.

She's limping.

"What happened to your foot, Homura-chan...?" Madoka crouches, hands already moving to push her socks down.

There's a bruise there—that Madoka has no idea how it came to be.

Madoka looks at her, but her face gives nothing away.

"Well, it'll heal," Madoka says, dismissing it.

\

She's leaning heavily on Madoka now; her foot is swollen and can barely support her weight.

They notice it too. Slowly, they're starting to get tired, and when they finally reach the end of the world, Madoka's stomach growls.

/

She's suddenly reminded of her poor health: they can no longer walk for long periods without taking breaks.

She struggles to catch her breath, and Madoka's hands are on her face.

The empty feeling in their stomachs, the dryness in their throats.

It either means the end is near, for them, or for the worlds.

\

They're one step away from the border, when Madoka gently lowers her to the ground.

She looks up, staring. There's lips on her face and she knows.

Hands slip under her jacket, a desperate need for one last reassurance.

/

There's strange creatures walking around them, washed out colours that bleed and drip in the background.

Madoka is somehow supporting most of her weight; mostly dragging her through the strange scenery.

It is nothing familiar, but there are sounds from deeper within.

It vaguely reminds Madoka of the first world—where things had started.

A deep breath, and they continue walking towards the sounds of gunshots echoing in their ears.

\

The long barrel of a gun almost has Madoka dropping her, but she barely manages to keep her hold.

There's a blonde staring at them, eyes wide in clear shock.

But there's a growl, and suddenly a strange circle is surrounding them.

"Don't worry, you two will be safe!"

Madoka doesn't know why, but she believes this stranger. She sets her down, and they watch as the newcomer destroys some kind of blob monster.

She knows she should be surprised, but she's too exhausted to care.

/

The next week is a whirlwind of events.

News reporting that Kaname Madoka has been found.

They're both admitted into the hospital.

Dehydration, malnourishment. A fix for her twisted ankle, some medicine for her recovering heart.

It's the first time they're separated since forever.

Madoka is distracted, surrounded by family.

And she, as she had decided long ago, sleeps.

\

The questions are relentless: where did you go?

Did you run away?

Did someone kidnap you?

Endless, endless questions, trying to understand what had happened.

Two weeks gone, and the various scars on their bodies paint a picture of abuse and torture.

Madoka has no answers; how can she explain an eternity spent?

She finally visits her that night. Ever since that day, she has been sleeping.

A hand on her cheek. "Homura-chan... wake up. Wake up, Homura-chan. Why are you still sleeping...?"

Madoka begs and pleads, and finally one eye cracks open.

"Homura-chan..."

/

Onto full recovery, Madoka is released from the hospital, and finally allowed to go home.

Her parents hover by her at all times; there's never a moment when she's alone.

It makes it hard to visit her, because she's still in the hospital, sleeping.

And unlike Madoka, she has no one.

She is nothing here, and the only thing that comforts her are her dreams.

\

Another few days without her, and Madoka is restless. She snaps at their questions, yells at their presence.

They finally leave her alone, and the first thing she does is sneak out the house, heading to the hospital.

/

She's still there, still sleeping. Madoka tries to wake her with soft kisses on her face, hands seeking familiar skin.

It works.

Lavender peers at her; she can just barely see the recognition in them.

It makes her angry.

She is none too gentle as she rips out the IVs. There's a splatter of blood, but she ignores it.

She tugs her from the bed, easily supporting her weight because she's so used to it now.

And they leave.

\

It's not easy slipping out from the hospital, but it's not too hard either.

Madoka pretends they're taking a walk, lowering her into a wheelchair.

The nurses are busy, the other patients have no idea.

Their news story has already been replaced by other things; she is but another faceless patient, and Madoka a normal girl on the road to recovery.

She pushes her out the door.

/

Madoka has no idea where to go. She's wandering through the city.

It's a familiar feeling.

"...When we were there, Homura-chan," Madoka says softly, feet still moving through the quiet park. "I had so many things I wanted to do. Now that we're back... I can't remember a single thing. Is that why you keep sleeping?"

As always, she doesn't reply.

Madoka remembers hearing on the news, something about damage to her larynx and vocal cords; the jagged scar across her throat the signifier.

That, had happened early on.

But Madoka knows the real reason she no longer speaks.

It's the same reason she can no longer sleep at night without her: they're still stuck in this endless loop, and they can't break free.

\

They're sitting on a park bench, when there's a voice.

"Kaname-san...?"

Madoka looks up. It's the blonde, Tomoe Mami, who had saved them.

"What are you two doing here...?" Mami looks at the wheelchair, then back to her.

Madoka tilts her head up. "Mm. I'm not sure. Why are any of us here...?" she murmurs.

/

They're invited over. Mami has an apartment all to herself, and between the two of them, it's easy to carry Homura up the stairs.

Once she's settled on the sofa and Madoka sitting right besides her, Mami disappears into the kitchen.

Cups of tea and slices of cake; Madoka feeds her, smiling when she takes a bite.

"It's chocolate, Homura-chan," she whispers softly.

Homura nods. She remembers.

Madoka leans in close, and Mami looks away.

\

That strange white creature is here as well, and once they finish eating, he speaks.

/You two are very peculiar/

The voice echoing in their minds confuses them, especially Homura, and it takes Madoka a few minutes to calm her down.

Madoka glares at him, eyes narrowed.

/I apologize, I had no idea she would react that way. Do not fear, Kaname Madoka, Akemi Homura, I am Kyuubey/ he turns his wide eyes towards them, trying to appear innocent and adorable.

Madoka ignores him, merely keeping her hands around Homura's waist and holding her close.

Mami clears her throat. "Kyuubey is harmless, though sometimes lacking in tact," she gives him a frown. "But we have discussed your situation, and it is quite amazing... to think, you two survived inside a Witch's barrier for so long..."

Madoka shrugs, hands fidgeting with the strings of Homura's hospital uniform. Mami had given them a very brief run through earlier, before they had been whisked away to try and regain their normal lives.

/It truly is. Most humans die. How did you two manage to survive?/

Mami sighs, shaking her head at Kyuubey.

Madoka shrugs once more. "I don't remember much. But, there was an opening, and we ran for it."

/Interesting. The borders in a barrier are usually quite sturdy; it's a rare occurrence for there to be any fluctuations/

Madoka trails her hands down Homura's back, and lavender turns to her in question.

Madoka gives her a smile.

/Regardless, you both have the qualifications to become magical girls. I can grant you any wish you like/

Madoka turns to him, eyes suddenly cold. "Any wish? You're about a few lifetimes kind of too late for that."

Kyuubey's tail swishes. /You can wish to heal her injuries. She will be able to talk once more/

Madoka presses her lips against Homura's neck. "It can't be as simple as you make it out to be. What's in exchange for these wishes?"

/Magical girls are the only ones that can safely enter barriers and destroy Witches. Witches are the source of despair in the world; they're the ones that influence humans into murdering each other, into committing suicide. For any wish you seek, it will be your responsibility to hunt and destroy them/

Madoka stares at him. "...It can't be that simple. Where do these Witches even come from? And 'any wish,' you say?" her hands cup Homura's cheek. "Homura-chan... you can repair her vocal cords, but will it heal everything else? How does your wish distinguish between what is said, compared to the intention?"

/If you have certain specifics, you will need to say it. Otherwise it will be a general wish, granting things superficially/

Madoka smiles, though her face looks less than amused. "And the Witches? Where do they come from?"

/If magical girls are made from hope, then Witches would be made from despair. They are on opposites of the spectrum/

"Huh," Madoka shakes her head. "It feels like you're not telling us something. Magical girls are made from hope? What happens if they

no longer have hope? Homura-chan, she hasn't had any hope in a long, long time. How would she continue to be a magical girl, if there's no hope inside her?"

/If there is no hope, then she will not be a magical girl for very long/

Madoka looks at him. "If hope is a magical girl... then you're saying that Homura-chan will end up becoming a Witch?"

Mami's eyes widen. "W-What?"

/Yes, a Witch is a magical girl who has given into their despair/

Madoka shakes her head. "Guess you weren't quite aware of that, Mami-san?"

Mami pales as she stares at Kyuubey. "W-What...? K-Kyuubey...?"

/It was something you never asked me, Mami. Well, you were under duress when you made your wish, but surely you have to have noticed certain things/

"Y-You lied to us...?"

/I answer questions that are asked of me. Specifics tend to lower chances of a contract, so it was decided to keep potential contractors in ignorance unless they asked/

Mami grips the table in front of her desperately. "We... we... we become Witches...?"

/It doesn't matter if you, or Akemi Homura makes the wish, Kaname Madoka. You have enough hope for her. I'm sure you will be able to remain a magical girl/

Madoka settles back into the couch. "You're pretty persistent... is there some reason you're targeting us?"

/Not everyone has the potential to become a magical girl. Also, your continuous exposure inside the Witch's barrier has changed the general make up of your soul. You two, hover between being a human, and something else. I am curious how that will affect your powers, once you contract and become a magical girl, and eventually a Witch/

Madoka sighs. "No, thank you." She turns to Homura. "Right, Homura-chan?"

/She is no longer able to talk, but, look what being a magical girl can grant you. I have linked us together; try thinking something, Akemi Homura, and project it out to the rest of us/

They wait, and Homura merely stares at him.

"It doesn't seem to be working," Madoka tells him.

/Strange. Why don't you try, Kaname Madoka/

"Hm..." Because she is curious, she complies. /Test? Testing? Homura-chan, if you can hear this, look at me?/

Homura turns to her.

"Okay, so I can speak to her," Madoka shakes her head. "Big deal?"

/The links are working, but it is unable to pick hers up. Strange/

Madoka smiles, hands reaching for Homura's. "For something that seems like a know it all, you don't really seem to know that much, do you?"

/Do you understand the reason why, Kaname Madoka?/

"I do."

/Explain/

"I don't feel like it." Madoka turns to Mami, who seems to be hovering on the edge of oblivion. "Mami-san?"

Mami looks up.

"Are you alright? You don't seem to be doing too well..."

"We... become the things we exist to destroy... what's... the purpose of living, if that is our end...?"

"I'm not sure, Mami-san," Madoka tells her. "We're kind of similar, in a way."

Mami stares at her. "Kaname-san...?"

Madoka looks at Homura, face softening. "Can you imagine, wandering endlessly, hoping, to someday go home... So many worlds... so many places... no hope in sight... and then, when that day arrives, it's like, that's it. You're supposed to continue on, like nothing happened. Like everything is normal. Like you're normal. Like you didn't just spend eternity wandering aimlessly...?"

She turns to Mami.

"You... went from a normal girl, to a magical girl. And you're fighting these Witches and stuff in the real world. Pretending that you're normal when you know differently. Neither of us are normal, Mami-san. I'm not sure what you're living for, but as for me..." Her hands lift Homura's, and she places a kiss on her wrist. "Homura-chan is my reason. You just need to find yours, Mami-san."

/

Kyuubey leaves.

Madoka is no closer to making a wish. Homura ignores him.

And Mami still seems to be hanging on.

\

Madoka is whispering to Homura when the doorbell rings.

Mami looks over, finally noticing the time.

"Ah... excuse me," she murmurs, standing to her feet to open the door.

The doorway is out of their view, but they can hear the sounds.

The door opening.

A voice.

"Sorry, Mami-san! I know we're supposed to go patrolling today, but you weren't picking up your phone, so I quickly came by to check!

Anyways, I really can't go tonight; my best friend, that one I told you about, she's missing. Again. I have to search for her—I—"

Madoka recognizes that voice. She places a kiss on Homura's lips, before she stands.

When she reaches the doorway, the visitor is almost gone, but—

"Sayaka-chan."

"...Madoka!?"

/

"...So you're a magical girl, too, huh Sayaka-chan?" Madoka asks, arms once more looped around Homura's waist.

Sayaka notices it, and narrows her eyes at the girl who still has yet to say anything. "Y-Yeah... are... are you one too, Madoka...?"

She doesn't remember seeing a ring though.

Madoka shakes her head. "No."

"Oh. Uhm... I had no idea you knew Mami-san."

Madoka gives her a smile. "Mami-san is the one who rescued me and Homura-chan."

Sayaka blinks. She turns to Mami, questions dancing in her head: why didn't Mami tell her...?

"What did you wish for, Sayaka-chan?"

"Eh?" Sayaka turns to Madoka.

Madoka, who looks the same, but is very much not. She has seen those reports on TV, information about Madoka's kidnapping...and abuse. She has been trying her best to push aside her guilt, for not using her wish on finding Madoka, but it doesn't really seem to work. Not when she sees this stranger in front of her.

She averts her eyes.

"I'm sorry," she whispers.

Madoka doesn't seem affected. "It's... how do they say it? 'Boys over flowers?'" her voice sounds amused.

Sayaka looks back up at her. "Madoka—"

"It's alright," Madoka reassures her. "I had Homura-chan. I wasn't by myself." She tightens her arms around Homura for emphasis. "By the way, I have a feeling you have no idea what you were signing up for when you contracted."

"What?"

Madoka gestures to the sullen Mami. "Haven't you noticed how quiet Mami-san has been? Just a moment ago, Kyuubey was here," Mami flinches at his name, "trying to entice me and Homura-chan into becoming magical girls."

Sayaka stares. "Are you going to...?"

"Sayaka-chan. Are you aware of what these Witches really are?"

"W-What? They're... accumulated despair."

Madoka shakes her head. "That's only half right. Sayaka-chan... how are you and Kamijou-kun doing?"

"Kyousuke? H-He's doing fine..."

"No. How are *you* and Kamijou-kun doing?"

"Uh..."

"Sayaka-chan... you need to find someone else to like. Otherwise you're going to turn into a Witch."

\

Her parents are angry when she returns home. They smother her with kisses and hugs, until finally, they notice the girl that Madoka is gripping onto tightly.

"This is Homura-chan," Madoka introduces her. "She was with me."

They know exactly what she's talking about.

Kaname Junko stares at Homura, noticing how pale she is, and how Madoka is supporting most of her weight. "She's... shouldn't she be in the hospital, Madoka?"

Madoka shakes her head. "No. If she's going back, I'm going with her."

"Madoka—"

"Mama."

Junko stares at Madoka, wondering where her daughter has gone.

Her hand tightens into a fist, and she wishes she knew who had done this to her baby girl.

"Alright," she sighs. "Let me... call the hospital to straighten this out."

Madoka brightens immediately. It's the first they've seen of their familiar Madoka. It eases their pain.

"Thank you, Mama."

/

The call is quick, and painless.

Homura has no guardians, and the only reason she was staying at the hospital was because she wouldn't wake up.

All her expenses are covered by her insurance, and ten minutes later, Akemi Homura is no longer a patient there.

\

Junko knocks once, before her hand pushes open the door.

"Mado—" her voice is caught in her throat when she sees just exactly what Madoka is doing. "...I will wait outside for you to get dressed. You have one minute."

/

Homura remains seated, half dressed on Madoka's bed, while Madoka sits next to her, clothes mussed from her quick change, and Junko stares them both down.

"You two... are...?"

Madoka tilts her head. "We're what, Mama?"

"...Close?"

Madoka smiles. "More than close, Mama."

Junko sighs. "Madoka. I... Help me understand, Madoka. Two weeks. You were missing for two weeks. What happened in those two weeks, Madoka? Were you really kidnapped?" she gestures to the silent Homura. "There were reports of you talking to Homura in school the day you disappeared. There were no leads, nothing! The surveillance footage—you were there, and then you were *gone*. Madoka... what happened?"

Madoka sits back, hands reaching for Homura's. "Mm... many things."

"Madoka, please."

This girl Junko sees in front of her—is not Madoka.

But she is.

"Madoka. I need to know. I need to know what happened." She looks to Homura—and she can see how her body is littered with scars.

And knows that Madoka is the same way.

"Did you... did you two run away together?"

Madoka blinks in surprise. "What?"

"Two girls... same sex couples are still not as accepted in society... was it an experiment? Some kind of strange fetish?" Junko points to the scars. "What is it? I don't understand! Madoka, please!"

Madoka stares, and she realizes that her mom is crying.

Her strong mom is biting back tears of frustration.

It's been so long though, that Madoka only feels anger from her reaction.

"...You think I deliberately ran away? That I deliberately left home, and that these scars," Madoka tugs open her shirt, exposing her bare skin and disfigured flesh to her mom, "these scars are some kind of fetish?" Without waiting for Junko to reply, she reaches over, pulling Homura's gown open. "That *these* scars were deliberate?"

"Madoka—"

"I don't even know what I'm supposed to be doing here! It was *two weeks* for you, but it was forever for me! Forever for the both of us! How am I supposed to tell you what happened when it doesn't even sound real in my own head?!"

"Mado—"

"I can't even sleep at night—" Madoka angrily gestures to her bed, tears spilling down her cheeks. "The bed is too soft—I'm too used to sleeping on hard ground. And Homura-chan isn't here with me—she's been in the hospital, *sleeping*, but no one seems to care that she doesn't want to wake up. What do you want me to do, Mama? Pretend that nothing happened? Pretend that I'm happy here, when I'm not? All I feel now is the urge to leave! This is not home to me anymore—I don't even know what home is!"

Madoka hiccups, hands brushing away her angry tears.

Homura reaches over, fingers tugging at Madoka's shirt.

Madoka turns to her and Junko can see it—they exchange something in their eyes.

Madoka takes a deep breath and drops down next to Homura, hand searching for hers.

Junko sighs. Her hands reach out, and she ignores Madoka flinch, fixing Madoka's shirt back into place. She does the same to Homura's.

"Madoka... please tell me what happened. I... would like to know."

Madoka looks at her, face still angry. "Alright."

/

Junko remains quiet, long after she finishes her story.

Madoka is exhausted, and leans heavily on Homura.

"Well?" Madoka asks her. "Do you believe me?"

Junko wants to say no—wants to pick up her phone and call the best psychologists and psychiatrists and get Madoka *help*.

Instead, she sighs. She moves, and she gathers the two broken girls in her arms.

"Yes. I believe you, Madoka."

Madoka pulls away, eyes searching her mother's face. "Why?"

"Why?" Junko repeats. "...Because you are Madoka. My Madoka, that I have raised for 14 years. A good kid, who never lies, who never cheats."

Junko kisses her atop her head, and Madoka cries, for different reasons this time.

\

"So, these barriers you were in, they're the work of these 'Witches?'" Junko asks.

Madoka nods, hands absently running across Homura's hips.

"And, regular people, are unable to see these 'Witches?'"

She nods again. "Yeah."

"But in actuality, these Witches are magical girls who have fallen into despair?"

"Yup."

Homura twitches: Madoka's touches are tickling her. It makes Madoka grin deviously.

Junko watches them for a moment. Madoka and Homura. Homura and Madoka. She can see it though, how her daughter continuously seeks reassurance that Homura is there. The constant touches. The constant looks.

Anyone can see they're both barely keeping each other afloat.

"And," Junko finally says, prompting Madoka to look at her. "The one responsible is some alien creature that grants adolescent girls wishes...?"

"Yeah," Madoka breathes out. "Something like that."

"I don't understand. What is its objective?"

Madoka shrugs. "Something about entropy. And energy in the universe. I wasn't really listening."

Junko sighs. "And you say I'm also unable to see this creature?"

"Yeah."

"Because I definitely have some questions I would like to ask it." Junko's eyes are hard and Madoka regards her for a moment.

"I can ask them for you, if you'd like, Mama."

Junko nods. "I just might have you do that, Madoka. Now... one thing that has been bothering me." She looks at Homura. "What's wrong with Homura?"

Madoka blinks. "What do you mean?"

"You know what I'm talking about, Madoka."

Madoka glances at Homura, and Junko can see just how much her daughter loves her; it scares her, really, because that's a love that spoke of lifetimes, not a brief crush, or a two week affair.

Madoka smiles. "The worlds we traveled... they're not exactly pleasant on the mind. At first, you know, there were always quiet whispers. Regrets in our ears. Things, trying to drive us slowly insane. They only increase the more you walk... Until it finally kind of gets to you."

Junko stares at her. "You... you are different, Madoka. But, considering what you both went through... you made it out a lot better than Homura."

Madoka turns to her, eyes unreadable. "...Did I really, Mama?"

"Madoka?"

Madoka closes her eyes. "The whispers... they prey on your insecurities. I've... I've always felt like I had no goals... that I was below average. That I'd never be as cool or as amazing as you, Mama." She opens her eyes. "It doesn't take that long to break, when you're there. I was... I was angry." She reaches over, hands running across Homura's neck. "I gave her this scar. I'm the reason Homura-chan no longer talks."

Madoka gives her another sad smile, this time with tears running down her cheeks.

"But Homura-chan forgave me. It's the last thing I heard from her; a choked whisper, blood dripping down her throat." Madoka sighs. "Homura-chan... her own insecurities got her pretty early on too. You notice how she's kind of... not really here?" Madoka asks, hands gently touching Homura's face.

Junko nods.

"Resignation... she left a giant part of her, somewhere over there." Madoka cries harder, reaching for Homura. "I almost left her. I almost abandoned her, blaming my anger, everything on her. I'm sorry, Homura-chan. I'm so, so sorry."

Junko waits, watching as Madoka holds Homura close, seeking that reassurance.

When she finally calms, Junko offers her a box of tissues. She clears her nose and wipes her eyes, and finally turns back to her mother.

"I don't think Homura-chan will ever recover," Madoka says softly. "Even now, for me, there's always this ball of anger in my chest, that makes me want to lash out at everything. I can understand why Kyuubey said that humans never make it out alive; it's so easy to lose yourself in there..."

Junko places a hand on her cheek. "But you didn't! You're here, Madoka. You and Homura. You are both here!"

Madoka smiles, but it's empty. "I don't think we'll last long out here, Mama. We already have one foot out the door. But," she turns to Homura, reaching for her hand. "Wherever I go, Homura-chan will be with me."

Junko wraps her arm around Madoka's small shoulders. "Madoka..." she bows her head. "Please, don't give up. Not so soon. Not when you just came back."

Like Homura, Madoka does not reply.

/

The door is locked, and they're both in bed. Homura sleeps curled next to her, and for once, Madoka feels herself falling asleep.

There's a rattle on the window. She tries her best to ignore it.

It continues, and when Homura moves, eyes opening from the sound, Madoka is angry and she pulls the curtain open.

Kyuubey.

Blankets covering her, Madoka opens the window and he slinks in.

Homura turns over, facing away from him, and Madoka glares.

"What do you want?"

/I was just checking up on you two/

Something about him makes her incredibly angry. "Yeah, we're doing fine. Now leave."

/I just thought you'd like to know, Mami isn't doing too well/

Madoka stares at him. "Did you tell Sayaka-chan this?"

/No/

"Do you plan to?"

/If you would like me to/

Homura reaches for her, trying to pull her down.

"I'll be right there, Homura-chan," Madoka murmurs, linking their hands together. She turns back to Kyuubey. "What do you expect to accomplish telling me about Mami-san?"

/In a week's time, a powerful Witch will be approaching this city. If Mami is taken out, the only protection this city has will be from Miki Sayaka. Even if you think it may not affect you, the Witch is capable of killing thousands of people in a second. This whole city, including any of your love ones, are in danger/

"...Okay, so what do you want me to do about that?"

/Hm, peculiar. Most humans don't show apathy when their family is involved/

Madoka gestures to the window. "Leave."

/You are giving up then?/

"I'm not making a wish, if that's what you're asking."

/Mami—/

Madoka sighs. "Geez, you are so persistent. Fine, I'll go check on her. Now get out, I need to get dressed."

/There is no need for me to leave. Our species—/

"Get. Out."

/...Very well/

Madoka closes the window and locks it, before she draws the curtains close.

She sighs. "Ugh. Just when I can finally get some sleep."

Homura blinks up at her.

"...You think Mama would be willing to drive me?"

Homura tilts her head.

"Hmm. That's true. She'd probably want to see this, or something. Come on, Homura-chan. Let's get dressed and visit Mami-san."

\

They ring the doorbell and as expected, Mami does not answer.

Madoka yawns; she really doesn't want to be here, and the sleepy Homura next to her most likely thinks the same.

Junko frowns. "Hm. You said that Kyuubey mentioned Mami isn't doing well?"

Madoka nods. "Yeah. She's probably turning into a Witch or something."

If it disturbs Junko how nonchalant Madoka is, she doesn't show it. "Alright. I guess this means I need to bring out the big guns."

Madoka watches as Junko pulls out a small metal box from her purse. "Mama?"

Junko winks at her. "Your Mama used to be a jack of trades of sorts, Madoka."

The box opens, revealing thin metal rods: lock picks.

Junko starts working on the door, and Homura leans against Madoka, eyes closing.

"...Can you show me how to do that, Mama?"

"Mm... maybe when you're a bit older."

They both ignore the fact that that may never happen.

/

When the door opens, they find Mami bowed over her coffee table.

Junko approaches her. "Are you alright?"

It's the unfamiliar voice that gains her attention. She looks up, surprised at the female adult standing in her living room.

"...You are...?"

A glance of movement, and Madoka with Homura next to her, steps into view.

"Kaname-san...? Why...?"

Junko smiles and waves. "Kaname Junko, at your service. Now, what seems to be the problem, Mami-chan?"

\

Madoka pads over to the sofa, dragging Homura with her.

She ignores how her mother and Mami are deep in conversation, and lies down.

"Come here, Homura-chan," she murmurs, holding out her arms.

Homura obediently does as told.

Their eyes close, and they sleep.

/

When Madoka wakes, it's to the sound of dishes clattering.

She moves, and Homura moves with her.

"Morning, Homura-chan," Madoka kisses her cheek, and lavender flutters open. Madoka grins.

They're sitting up, and Homura has found her glasses when Mami returns from the kitchen.

"Good morning you two," she smiles at them.

She looks a lot better today.

"Your mother went back home, to get ready for work. She told me to let you two sleep," she tells them before Madoka can ask.

Madoka yawns. "I see."

"I have extra toothbrushes, in the bathroom. You remember where it is?"

Madoka nods. "Yes, thank you." She stands. "Let's go brush our teeth, Homura-chan."

Mami watches them, walking hand in hand.

There's the usual jealousy there, but for some reason it's muted today.

Maybe...

\

"You told your mom about us!?"

Madoka brushes the crumbs from Homura's cheek, completely ignoring Sayaka. "You're so messy, Homura-chan..."

"Madoka!" Sayaka yells to try and get her attention.

Madoka turns to her, eyes narrowed in annoyance. "Yes. I did."

"Why would you do that? This has nothing to do with your mom!"

Madoka watches as Homura continues to eat her cookie, more crumbs sticking to her mouth. It's adorable. If Sayaka wasn't here, that is.

Madoka sighs. "Well, I had to explain to her what happened to me. So, at some point I kind of had to explain what a Witch was?"

Sayaka grits her teeth. This is not the Madoka she knows. "Alright. I get that. But, did you have to tell her that I am also a magical girl?"

Madoka stares at her. "It kind of just slipped out."

"Slipped? How does it *slip*!?"

"I don't know," Madoka snaps. "How does one just kind of slip into a Witch's barrier?"

Madoka glares while Sayaka looks horrified.

"Madoka..."

"Whatever," she sighs out. "Mama knows. And she helped stop Mami from turning into a Witch. Maybe she'll do the same for you. Does it really matter if she knows or not? It's not like she's going to tell everyone, 'hey, this girl is a magical girl!' or whatever."

Sayaka looks away.

This is not the Madoka she knows.

/

Mami becomes a constant fixture in their house.

But, Madoka doesn't really care.

The blonde gets along well with her dad, and they exchange recipes and tips on cooking.

Mami absolutely adores Takkun.

And even Madoka can see how enamored she is of her mom.

\

A few days before Walpurgisnacht, another magical girl shows up.

Sakura Kyouko.

The Kaname household is growing.

She's the perfect addition though: she eats all the extra food that Mami keeps cooking with Madoka's dad.

Homura though, is starting to become more restless.

Madoka can feel it as well.

It's a familiar feeling.

/

The weather turns into rain, and Madoka finds Homura standing outside.

She's staring up, into gray clouds, and Madoka knows exactly what she's thinking.

The water feels nice against their skin.

It reminds her of—

\

Three magical girls versus one powerful Witch.

Madoka is holding onto Homura tightly; if she lets her go, she'll run outside.

Her dad sends her worried looks as he tries to distract Takkun with the toys they brought from home.

They're in the shelter, but Junko is not here.

/

She can feel it, the disappearance of Walpurgisnacht.

She slips away when her dad has to take Takkun to the bathroom, Homura is trailing after her, a little more calm now.

They navigate through the ruins expertly, and she finds her, lying in a pool of pink water.

There's concrete crushing her legs, blood running across her face.

Madoka stares.

\

/Do you want to make a wish, Kaname Madoka?/

Madoka is not at all surprised to see Kyuubey.

She glances at him. "What about the others? Sayaka-chan... Kyouko-chan... Mami-san."

/They managed to destroy Walpurgisnacht/

"That doesn't answer my question."

/At the cost of their own lives/

Madoka turns back to Homura, hands touching her face. "Homura-chan..."

Kyuubey's tail swishes. If he had emotions, it would be the equivalent of him waiting in anticipation.

Madoka smiles, moving closer to kiss Homura.

She pulls back, and turns to Kyuubey. "Alright, incubator. I guess you finally get what you've been waiting for."

/What is your wish, Kaname Madoka?/

Madoka grips Homura's hand tightly. "I wish... that Homura-chan has unlimited power to have anything she wants. To do anything she wants to do."

There's a pause, and Kyuubey lifts his head. /She is unable to project her thoughts, are you sure that is wise?/

"Grant me my wish, incubator."

He doesn't say anything, and suddenly there's pain from her chest.

She gasps, hands tightening as she feels something being torn away.

Homura hovers by her, face worried, but just as sudden, it's gone.

/Your wish has been granted, Kaname Madoka/

Madoka reaches out and grasps her soul gem in her hands. She has seen Mami's and Sayaka's and Kyouko's.

Hers, is not a bright pink, as she thought it would be.

It's a bright purple.

"Hm." She transforms, and glances down at herself. A poofy, pink and white dress. "Guess I'm not all gone..."

She turns to Homura.

"Homura-chan. You have the power to do whatever you'd like. You can even heal your throat."

Homura stares at her, and that's when Madoka notices there's a jewel on her left hand.

Triangular shaped.

A bright pink.

/Interesting. You two are now linked. Is this what you had planned all along, Kaname Madoka?/

Madoka smiles. "What I want, is what Homura-chan wants. What Homura-chan wants... is what I want."

There's a flash of light, and the body of Kaname Junko disappears.

/You.../

The world around them distorts, and the buildings slowly turn back in time.

Another flash, and suddenly it's just Madoka, Homura, and Kyuubey, standing on the streets of Mitakihara.

She looks down to him.

/...Who are you? You.../

"You are not needed here, incubator. Mitakihara is not a place with Witches; there are only normal fears here, normal regrets. This city... has no need for you."

He stares at her, tail swishing.

"Leave. The people here... they will be protected from things like you."

/You cannot expect isolation just for one city. Once they leave the borders—/

"I am entirely aware of what will happen," Madoka tells him. She reaches out and holds Homura's hand. "If only for a brief moment, I'd at least like to protect the people closest to me... It won't last forever, but it's the best I can do with what I have. Now, leave."

/You—/

His voice is cut off as he disappears.

Madoka gives Homura a smile. "Thank you Homura-chan." She lifts her hand, kissing it lightly. "...Shall we?"

Homura stares at her, and nods.

Madoka holds out her hand, and there's a rift as reality distorts. They both walk towards it, and there's no hesitation as they step inside.

It closes, and they're gone.

/

"Madoka. Is this what you really wanted?"

It's been forever since she has heard that voice. Madoka smiles. "Of course, Homura-chan."

"We... we could've changed things... gone back in time," Homura gestures around them. "Make it so that we would have never been trapped."

Madoka grasps her hand tighter. "We could do many things, Homura-chan. But," she turns to her, eyes full of love, "this is what you wanted. And what you want, is what I want."

Homura closes her eyes. "I don't deserve someone like you, Madoka..."

Lips against hers. She opens her eyes, lavender, staring into pink.

"I don't deserve someone like you, Homura-chan..." Madoka's hands brush Homura's neck.

"I forgave you, a long time ago."

"I know."

"Maybe," Homura says, looking at her, "you should finally forgive yourself."

Madoka nods. "Maybe."

They thread their hands together, and continue further down the corridor.

"I'd... like a house," Madoka tells her. "With a little garden in the front."

"That sounds nice."

"Oh, and I'm definitely going to destroy that mountain."

"I will help you."

"And drain that stupid whirlpool."

"Maybe divert the water to one of the deserts?"

Madoka grins. "Yeah, that sounds like a good idea." She lifts Homura's hand, pressing more kisses onto it. "We'll make our own world, right, Homura-chan?"

Homura nods. "Just you and I, Madoka."

"Yeah," she says softly. "Just you and I, Homura-cha**n."**

AN: I wanted something where they wandered aimlessly. And somehow got this instead. ?_?